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General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

37th plenary meeting
Monday, 3 November 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(b) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.7)

(c) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(d) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.9)

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(f) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(g) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.12)

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

(i) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(j) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.13)

(k) Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(m) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Draft resolution (A/63/L.10)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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(n) Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(o) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/155)

(p) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

(q) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

(r) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(s) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

(t) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/156)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.11)

(u) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228)

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

We are now witnessing a blossoming of regionalism in all corners of the world. Now more than ever, regional organizations and arrangements have played a pivotal role in bringing countries together and nurturing a habit of consultation and cooperation in all areas of common concern and interest. ASEAN welcomes that blossoming and strengthening of regionalism because we see regionalism as a building block of, and a supporting pillar for, the effective global multilateralism that is embodied in the United Nations.

We are also witnessing a blossoming of partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. ASEAN welcomes the increasing emphasis that the United Nations has given to forging partnerships with many regional organizations in all regions of the world. Such a partnership in this interdependent and globalized world is truly a win-win relationship. By engaging with regional organizations, the United Nations benefits from their in-depth and unique understanding about the challenges, concerns, sensitivities and nuances of those regions. At the same time, regional organizations would benefit from the United Nations vast wealth of expertise, best practices and networks in a broad range of issues.

ASEAN is committed to continuing to advance the noble principles and objectives of the United Nations in South-East Asia. For over 40 years since its founding in 1967, ASEAN has emerged as a stable force for regional peace and security, for enhanced economic integration and for the creation of a community of caring and sharing societies. Through ASEAN, countries of South-East Asia come together and peacefully interact on all issues of common concern for the region. Through habit of working together and consensus-making, ASEAN countries have been successful in turning enmity into amity. By managing differences and emphasizing commonalities, ASEAN as a group has managed to overcome successive challenges facing the region. But ASEAN knows that we cannot be complacent. And that is why we are witnessing a renaissance of ASEAN in South-East Asia.

At the ASEAN summit in Singapore last year, ASEAN leaders came together with common objectives in mind: to make South-East Asia a better place, to make ASEAN a stronger organization and to ensure that ASEAN will continue to be a strong and effective partner for international peace, stability and prosperity.

At that summit in Singapore, ASEAN leaders took a bold step forward by signing a landmark ASEAN Charter, which will provide a legal and institutional framework to make ASEAN a more rules-based, people-centred, effective and efficient organization. The signing of the ASEAN Charter was a

significant milestone in the ASEAN community-building process, whose goal is to transform a region that is home to over 500 million people into an ASEAN Community by 2015. It is also important to note that, by signing the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN leaders have committed themselves to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, and respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, while respecting the fundamental importance of amity and cooperation and the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, non-interference, consensus and unity in diversity. Today, the ASEAN member States are working to ratify the ASEAN Charter in time for its entry into force at the fourteenth ASEAN summit, in Thailand in December 2008.

Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations has been long and enduring and has grown from strength to strength. The United Nations Development Programme was designated an ASEAN Dialogue Partner in 1977 and has since been working closely with ASEAN in a wide range of regional development issues. In 2006, ASEAN was granted observer status in the General Assembly. In 2007, the Secretaries-General of ASEAN and the United Nations signed a memorandum of understanding on ASEAN-United Nations cooperation to promote a full range of cooperation based on mutual benefits.

However, it took the tragic Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 to really test and prove the strength and resilience of the partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations. In response to that natural disaster, ASEAN firmly adhered to the ASEAN way that emphasizes understanding, dialogue and, most important, trust and confidence, while being clear about the need for the group to act. Thus the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force for the Victims of the Cyclone Nargis was established in May this year by ASEAN Foreign Ministers to work closely with the United Nations and Myanmar in coordinating international assistance. In so doing, ASEAN successfully acted to build a diplomatic bridge with the international community through the United Nations.

It is evident that the ASEAN-led coordination mechanism and the Tripartite Core Group subsequently established on the basis of partnership between Myanmar, ASEAN and the United Nations have played a pivotal role in ensuring the timely, coordinated, systematic and effective delivery and utilization of emergency humanitarian relief supplies, as well as planning for recovery and rebuilding efforts over the longer term. That partnership has been welcomed by all sides, including the United Nations, as a successful model of cooperation that could be applied to other regions facing humanitarian emergencies.

We are determined to sustain and build on that positive momentum of partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations. In December this year, the third ASEAN-United Nations summit will be held in Thailand. It will provide a good opportunity for ASEAN leaders and the Secretary-General, as well as heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, to forge a comprehensive and system-wide partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations.

ASEAN believes that there are many endeavours in which ASEAN and the United Nations could benefit from working together on critical areas of global concern, such as mitigating the impacts of the current global financial crisis and other pressing issues such as attaining the Millennium Development Goals, food and energy security, environmental management and climate change, strengthening global and regional cooperation on disaster management, and fighting against deadly infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and avian flu.

This year, ASEAN will also submit a biennial draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations under this agenda item. The draft resolution is based on the most recent resolution on that subject (resolution 61/46), which the Assembly adopted by consensus in December 2006. The draft resolution contains factual updates on positive developments regarding cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN during the past two years. ASEAN hopes that this draft resolution will enjoy strong support from our partners, as in the past.

ASEAN is going through an exciting time in its evolution. It is transforming itself from a community of ten ASEAN countries into an ASEAN community, from a collection of different markets and production bases into a single market and production base, and from a community of ten identities into a community based on a common identity.

ASEAN is confident that, together as one in the spirit of ASEAN solidarity, we will succeed in

achieving the goal that we have set for ourselves. ASEAN's success will be the success of the United Nations because a stronger, more cohesive and effective ASEAN will be a stronger and more effective partner for the United Nations.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): I have the honour to present this statement on behalf of members of the Pacific Islands Forum based in New York, namely: Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and New Zealand.

At the outset, I thank the Secretary-General for his report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/63/228). The cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum has gained momentum in recent years, and we are pleased that the United Nations has observer status at the Forum.

We encourage regular consultations between our Forum's Secretariat and the United Nations, as well as United Nations participation in meetings of Pacific Islands Forum leaders.

We welcome the cooperation of United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to help the Pacific Islands address and overcome the ever-growing challenges before us, especially the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The United Nations "delivering as one", processes are already under way in the Pacific region. The development of the United Nations development assistance framework for the Pacific subregion, which covers the period from 2008 to 2012 and brings together 15 United Nations agencies located in several different countries, has been a significant step towards implementing this "delivering as one" approach.

We also need to work closely together to ensure full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Global financial and economic turbulence and the threat of global recession pose great risks to us all. Small, isolated economies like many of those in our region are especially vulnerable. The Forum's engagement with the United Nations and its funds and programmes helps to address those areas of vulnerability and to strengthen national and regional development, thereby strengthening our region's ability to engage with the international community.

We can already point to a number of areas of valuable cooperation with the United Nations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has supported implementation of the Forum's Pacific Plan, which is the overarching framework for collaboration and cooperation among Forum countries. We also appreciate the work done by UNDP and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to support the integration of MDGs into national development strategies in our region. Other assistance has been provided in the areas of disaster risk management, human security, anti-corruption, private sector development and disabilities issues.

Donor coordination and aid delivery in accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness has been a growing focus in our region. Pacific leaders have adopted the Pacific Aid Effectiveness Principles, emphasizing the importance of this work to all of us. We welcome the work of the UNDP Pacific Centre on enhancing donor coordination in the region, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with United Nations agencies in that respect.

We are grateful too for the work done by the United Nations Environmental Programme in our region on sustainable development, and for its support for the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), which is involved in a range of environmental programmes in the Pacific. UNICEF's efforts that focus on improved nutrition, child immunization, better quality child-focused data and budgeting are much needed. We also welcome engagement between United Nations agencies and Pacific regional organizations in coordinating our response on HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

These areas of cooperation, and many others not listed, are greatly valued, as is the strengthened United Nations presence in our region in recent years. However, we do believe that there is still scope to do significantly more and, in particular, to increase the impact of the partnerships between the United Nations system and the Pacific Islands Forum. We urge all United Nations agencies operating in the region to constantly assess their role and engagements against that of Pacific regional agencies. It is critical that we

all look to maximize collaborative action and avoid duplication.

Finally, we note that the Pacific Islands Forum covers a vast region of island States and that our region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. A draft resolution entitled "Security and climate change" (A/63/L.8) has been submitted by Pacific small island developing States under agenda item 107. We encourage all Member States to support that draft resolution.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Group in New York. I would like to thank and commend the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and informative biennial report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/63/228). From the outset, I wish to reiterate the commitment of the OIC to deepening its cooperation with the United Nations.

I would also like to acknowledge the successful outcome of the biennial general meeting on cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC, held in Geneva from 8 to 10 July 2008. The Secretary-General's report captures some of the major outcomes of this meeting, some of which I would like to highlight today as they merit inclusion in the upcoming resolution on OIC-United Nations cooperation.

First, the report enumerates the efforts undertaken by the two organizations in enhancing practical cooperation and building complementarity through regular meetings at the level of the Secretaries-General and through consultations among other critical actors, including the Special Adviser on the International Compact with Iraq, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the High-level Coordinator on the issue of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third country nationals or their remains.

Secondly, the report draws attention to the International Conference on Terrorism, held in November 2007 in Tunisia and coordinated by the two organizations in partnership with the Government of Tunisia, where a fruitful exchange of views took place. Participants dispelled misapprehensions about Islam, identified vulnerable areas exploited by terrorists in the social, cultural, ethical and ideological spheres, and recommended solutions to make those areas less conducive to their use.

Thirdly, the report notes that the Geneva meeting of the representatives of the United Nations system and OIC and its specialized institutions in July reviewed cooperation in various fields, including science, technology, trade, development, implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), refugees, human resource development, food security, agriculture, environment, health, population, arts, crafts and promotion of heritage. Both sides also agreed to improve follow-up mechanisms by identifying focal points and exchanging lists of officials specializing in areas of common interest.

Fourthly, the report notes that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has been developing a dialogue with OIC to reach out to non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors in Islamic countries, and that UNICEF has been exploring ways to develop and formalize its partnership with OIC, including specific initiatives linked to the MDGs as part of the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action.

I commend the Secretary-General for highlighting the aforementioned developments and urge follow-up in the implementation of agreed activities and programmes.

I would now like to draw attention to several other equally important issues, undertakings and decisions pertaining to OIC-United Nations cooperation that did not appear in the Secretary-General's report, which also require follow-up and implementation.

First is the general meeting's acknowledgement that the OIC remains an important partner to the United Nations in peace and security and in fostering a culture of peace at the global level, and the agreement between the two sides to continue cooperation in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Second is the United Nations offer to inform the OIC of and invite it to seminars and other training opportunities in the areas of conflict prevention, negotiations, mediation and elections organized by and for the United Nations.

Third are the efforts of the two organizations to promote and facilitate the Middle East peace process in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003), General Assembly resolution 194 (III),

the Arab Peace Initiative, the Road Map and the commitments of the Annapolis Conference. Those should be recognized, and inter-organizational cooperation in all fields that serve that goal should be encouraged.

Fourth, the OIC proposal for greater interaction between the two Secretariats beyond the current biennial arrangement to include a periodic review of cooperation should be acknowledged through appropriate follow-up directives.

Fifth is the close cooperation between the OIC Secretariat and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in advancing dialogue and intercultural understanding, including the Secretary-General's participation in the OIC summit inviting the Alliance to all major OIC conferences, and holding meetings between the OIC Secretary-General and the High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations to institutionalize cooperation between the two organizations and finalize a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations.

Sixth is multifaceted cooperation among the OIC and the United Nations and its specialized agencies in humanitarian affairs, which should be welcomed. There is a need to pursue greater proactive engagement, resulting in the implementation of concrete programmes in capacity-building, emergency assistance and strategic partnerships.

Seventh, the two organizations should strengthen cooperation in fighting poverty in Member States to promote sustainable development and achieve the MDGs.

Lastly, at the Annual Coordination Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Member States of the Islamic Conference, held on 26 September 2008 here at the United Nations, it was decided to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the OIC in 2009 with national and international programmes on different aspects of the OIC, highlighting its activities, evolution and reform. The OIC looks forward to collaborating with the United Nations in the commemoration.

I would like to conclude by underlining the essential role that cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations can play in the achievement of international peace and prosperity, including the MDGs. However, our approach must be pragmatic and holistic to ensure that agreed activities are implemented. That will require the wider international community to lend its full support to attaining that objective. The OIC Group will be tabling a draft resolution under agenda item 114 — Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations — and we look forward to the full support of all our partners.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Building a collective approach, which is crucial to overcome temporary threats and challenges effectively, requires a gradual strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, based on the firm foundation of the United Nations Charter, especially Chapter VIII.

The United Nations and regional organizations are intended to complement each other harmoniously and to make use of their specific comparative advantages. With respect to the United Nations, that means above all universality of membership and of areas of activity and universally recognized legitimacy. In turn, regional organizations often have a better understanding of local circumstances and more suitable equipment, as well as their own sources of financing. A clear division of labour, while maintaining the prerogatives of the United Nations and its Security Council, will make it possible to increase the capacity in the international community for dealing with crises.

We think that regular meetings of the Secretary-General of the United Nations with leaders of regional organizations are extremely relevant. The United Nations agenda of cooperation with its regional partners is becoming more ambitious and multifaceted. To peacekeeping and peacebuilding goals have been added combating the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, resolving other destabilizing cross-border problems, fighting drug trafficking and organized crime and contributing to solving the various complex socio-economic issues around the world.

The Russian Federation continues to strongly support further strengthening multifaceted cooperation between the United Nations and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), which has made significant contributions to overcoming contemporary problems

and challenges at both the regional and global levels. We welcome the already solid ties those regional mechanisms have with the United Nations and their joint implementation of a number of projects and programmes.

Integrated processes in our region have become more mature and active and have increasingly drawn in countries from neighbouring subregions. The legal, institutional and financial basis for that kind of cooperation is becoming firmly established. Within the CIS, CSTO and EURASEC, systematic and comprehensive interaction is under way, including in such areas as ensuring security, peacekeeping, fighting organized and cross-border crime, economic development and trade, environmental protection, humanitarian relief operations and regulation of migration.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the CSTO has considerable potential. Within the CSTO, very intensive work is under way to establish its own in-house peacekeeping potential, including for use in the framework of United Nations peacekeeping operations. There are considerable opportunities for pooling the efforts of those two organizations.

Cooperation between CSTO member States on United Nations issues is based not only on common positions on many of the current problems on the United Nations agenda, but also on an understanding of the need to strengthen its leading role in international affairs. We are interested in maximizing the collective mechanisms and potential of the United Nations in neutralizing challenges to regional security arising from international terrorism and in contributing to economic development.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is playing an increasing role in ensuring stability in the Eurasian region. Its members favour further developing their cooperation with the United Nations in a number of very important areas, including fighting international terrorism and the illegal drug trade, thus contributing to the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan.

In the very near future, the States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization intend to raise the issue of including on the agenda of the Assembly's sixty-fourth session a new item on cooperation between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

We also support further strengthening cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Community and the United Nations. EURASEC is developing rapidly at present. Cooperation is under way on a number of key issues, including transport cooperation, energy, tourism, environmental protection, overcoming emergency situations, migration, education and other areas. Within the Community, steps have been taken to establish a customs union, a free trade area and a single energy market.

Now that intensive and practical activity is fully in line with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and further strengthens the commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, which is enshrined in the constitutive documents of the Community. The Eurasian Economic Community furthermore has played a key role in the extensive structures of multilateral cooperation in the region aimed at ensuring sustainable development, stability, peace and security. That makes it an important partner of the United Nations system in our region and points to the need to further step up efforts to develop cooperation between the two organizations.

According to the report of the Secretary-General, the main achievements in that area have been highlighted. We welcome those achievements, but we believe it is necessary to further strengthen cooperation. With a view to strengthening the results of that cooperation, Russia has, together with Belarus, the current president of the Community, submitted to the United Nations a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community. We attach great importance to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus and wish to thank all delegations that have taken part in its elaboration and have joined its original two sponsors.

We also think that the potential for mutually beneficial cooperation between the United Nations and other integration mechanisms in the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States is far from having been exhausted. In that context, we expect more activity, initiative and openness to dialogue from the leadership of the United Nations agencies. Russia is ready to do its part to work towards further strengthening that cooperation.

I would like also to mention the issue of cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC).

Russia is an active and concerned member of that main comprehensive forum for Black Sea cooperation. We support efforts to further increase the work of that organization and to adapt it to current realities. We are convinced that ensuring stable development, prosperity and security in the region will require the implementation of long-term mutually beneficial economic projects carried out in the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. We think that projects such as the circular motorway around the Black Sea and the establishment of a circular Black Sea electric power grid are excellent examples of that kind of project.

We support the work already under way in the BSEC to create a common energy strategy for countries in the region. We think that cooperation between the BSEC and the European Union should be based on equal footing and mutual benefit and the Community preserve, even augment, its own identity. The BSEC is also ready to cooperate with countries outside the region. That participation should be based on the principle of non-interference in the development of multilateral cooperation between the countries of the region on the basis of their interests, capacities, skills and experience. It would be especially counterproductive to try to politicize economic ties in the region and cooperation in the framework of the BSEC.

We believe the BSEC has an excellent future. The organization is a functioning part of the overall European cooperation system and the integration processes on the continent and is able to play a role in bringing the peoples of the region closer together and is finding balance and common ground in the Black Sea region. By strengthening its cooperation with the United Nations, we will further contribute to that progress. Russia fully supports the draft resolution on the matter and has become one of its sponsors.

We also think that cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe is moving along nicely. The development of cooperation between those two organizations will contribute to ensuring peace and security and will protect human rights, not only in Europe but around the world as a whole.

The draft resolution on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe (A/63/L.12), which is being considered by the General Assembly today, fully meets those goals, and we hope that, just as it was two years ago, it will be adopted by consensus.

We would like to see further development of cooperation between the United Nations and other European organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, where mechanisms for reacting to emergencies are being developed. What is essential there is to fully recognize the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, including the imposition of mandatory sanctions and political control over peace enforcement operations. That fundamental principle based upon Chapter VIII of the Charter should also govern cooperation between the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

We must further increase positive cooperation between the Organization and regional and subregional partners in Africa, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

An important role in seeking peaceful solutions to the many problems of their regions will be played by the League of Arab States, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization of American States and various Latin American organizations. Russia has established and is developing dynamic relationships with all of those organizations.

Mr. Menon (Singapore): Allow me to first thank the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/63/228). We would also like to associate ourselves with the statement made by Thailand on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and commend the Secretary-General for his leadership and support in fostering and strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN.

Much of our work in this session has been clouded by bad news. The lack of progress in the Doha Round, the food and fuel price crises, the financial meltdown on Wall Street and the resultant economic turmoil across the globe have all cast a long shadow over our deliberations at the sixty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly. We have had debates on the role that the United Nations can and

should play to restore global confidence during this time of economic, social and political crises. Smaller countries like mine have a strong vested interest in seeing international institutions strengthened, so that they can better deal with the various problems.

While reform of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions is important and urgent, we can also make these international institutions more effective by encouraging them to forge strong partnerships with regional institutions that play useful roles in fostering regional peace and development. Indeed, even the United Nations Charter recognizes the role that regional arrangements can play in helping the United Nations to achieve its various objectives. Take ASEAN as an example: many of you will recall that, when Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in May this year and caused a humanitarian crisis in the country, there was for several days a stand-off between the Myanmar Government and the international community over the provision of assistance. ASEAN had to step in and build a bridge of trust between the Myanmar Government and the international community.

A tripartite organization involving the United Nations, ASEAN and the Myanmar Government worked effectively to overcome problems on the ground and ensured that international aid reached the furthest corners of the affected area. It also prevented a second wave of deaths from hunger or disease. ASEAN on its own did not have the capabilities to help Myanmar in a major way, but ASEAN working together with the United Nations and other international agencies was able to make a huge difference. In the process, we in ASEAN also learned a great deal about disaster management from bodies like the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, it is also a fact that every region has its own distinctive characteristics, which must be taken into account when building partnerships between the United Nations and the particular region. It may or may not be possible to replicate what ASEAN was able to achieve with the United Nations in the case of Cyclone Nargis, in other parts of the globe. In short, there is no one-size-fits-all model for cooperation between the United Nations and regional institutions. To expect otherwise would be to ignore the fact that every region has its own unique characteristics, priorities and needs. The Secretary-General's report makes that point and shows how wide-ranging such models of partnership can be.

Unfortunately, instead of celebrating the rich diversity that exists in the global community, my delegation has observed a tendency on the part of some Member States to try to impose some of their values and practices at the regional level on the rest of the global community. They expect the rest of us to welcome those values and practices, which are peculiar to their region, and to embrace them as universal values.

Some members may recall that, in 2004, my delegation took the floor during the debate on this same agenda item to object to an attempt by the Council of Europe to impose its views regarding the death penalty upon the rest of us through its resolution on cooperation with the United Nations. In that regard, my delegation was baffled by the attempt by the Council of Europe again this year to slip similar and even more controversial elements into its draft resolution and to expect all of us to go along with it. Fortunately, consensus on that resolution was preserved, at least as of now, because the Swedish chair of the informal consultations exercised strong leadership and professional objectivity during the negotiations.

All of us should acknowledge that in a universal organization such as the United Nations, there will be some occasions when we will not necessarily be able to agree with one another because of our different values or practices. Our task will certainly be more complicated if some delegations insist on disregarding the valid concerns of others and attempting to impose their views on the rest of the United Nations membership.

When we are confronted by multiple crises, either at home or at the global level, we should all rise to the challenge and work in collaboration to strengthen the United Nations and regional organizations. This is no time to be running roughshod over each other's views. We can only achieve a "we community" — a concept that the President of the General Assembly has often talked about — when we learn the basic rule of respect and empathy for each other's views, and that has to start here in the Assembly.

Mr. McNee (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is an essential tool for the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations and its various bodies. That cooperation is key to peace and security efforts. The expertise of and means of regional organizations complement those of the United Nations, and thereby enhance the contributions of each.

Canada has established partnerships with various players, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern Africa Development Community, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Caribbean Community, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), on a host of issues. Those partnerships illustrate the importance we place on the involvement of regional players.

We would also like to reiterate the responsibilities of Member States to support cooperation between the United Nations and various organizations in order to ensure that such cooperation is effective. For example, donors and countries contributing troops to peace missions under the aegis of various organizations must ensure that those troops are endowed with the resources they need to carry out their mandates.

The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in Darfur illustrates a number of possibilities and demonstrates the challenges which such cooperation poses. That cooperation is still necessary to foster African solutions to threats to peace and security on that continent. Because peace and security in Africa are closely related to the human rights situation, governance and development, extensive cooperation among the relevant bodies of the United Nations and the African Union is also necessary.

I would like to highlight further examples of cooperation with regional partners that are relevant to the United Nations. Canada's working, for example, to develop practical approaches to cooperation with the ASEAN Regional Forum. In addition, we are monitoring the cohesion between the efforts of the OAS and other regional institutions in the Americas. We are also following cooperation efforts between the OAS and all of the parties that support development in Haiti. We would also like to highlight the joint cooperation between the United Nations and NATO in Afghanistan. We welcome the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE, particularly in Kosovo and Georgia.

The United Nations and regional organizations must also cooperate closely to integrate fragile States into the world economy. The United Nations must also work with regional economic organizations in order to participate in development efforts.

I would like to take this opportunity to specifically address cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF). The OIF has diplomatic capabilities in the areas of prevention and mediation that we would like to see strengthened so that the Organization can help resolve international crises more effectively, particularly in certain francophone countries, and fully participate in finding collective and realistic solutions.

A few days ago, the twelfth francophone summit was held in Quebec City, with some 30 heads of State or Government, the Secretary-General of the OIF and the Secretary-General of the United Nations in attendance. The summit was an opportunity to discuss issues that are mobilizing the international community, such as the financial crisis, and to focus on four other major issues within the francophone world: democracy and the rule of law; governance and economic solidarity; the environment; and the French language.

The heads of State or Government adopted the Quebec City declaration, which contains specific and concrete commitments on each of those major issues. Armenia's status changed from observer to associate member at the summit, and Thailand and Latvia were admitted as observers. The OIF is now comprised of 70 States and Governments.

A high point in cooperation between the United Nations and the francophone world came on 28 March 2008, when the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the OIF reviewed international policy issues and welcomed the similarity of their views on world peace, peaceful conflict resolution, the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. They also expressed the desire to implement operational mechanisms to facilitate consultations, the ability to refer issues to one another

and coordination between the two organizations in the context of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts that may arise in the francophone world.

Cooperation between the two organizations also requires the enhancement of the OIF's involvement in mobilizing francophone contingents in United Nations peacekeeping operations. More than half of the troops deployed by the United Nations are serving in francophone countries. While the number of such missions is increasing, the number of French-speaking personnel engaged in those operations is declining, which is causing communications problems on the ground.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the OIF also necessitates a stronger OIF presence in Peacebuilding Commission activities, in particular in the country-specific configurations for Burundi, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic. Other areas of cooperation, in particular electoral observation and assistance, may also be enhanced.

Finally, cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie is also key to the successful implementation of resolution 61/266, on multilingualism, adopted last year.

Resolution 61/7 currently defines the framework for cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie. In the coming days, Canada will submit a draft resolution designed to update the parameters of that framework in the wake of the recent adoption of the Quebec City declaration a few days ago, with a view to guiding joint activities in the coming years. We are delighted at the thought of seeing the results of that cooperation in the coming months, which will pave the way for the preparations for the next Francophonie summit, to be held in Madagascar in 2010.

(*spoke in English*)

In conclusion, Canada, in cooperation with other Member States, will continue to ensure that cooperation between the two organizations remains productive so that francophone experience is used to the fullest extent in carrying out the United Nations mission, and so that the relationship becomes a model of complementarity between United Nations action and that of regional organizations. Our capacity to manage effectively the wide range of issues facing us will determine how cooperation between the United Nations, especially the Security Council, and regional organizations develops.

Mr. Mansour (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): The debate that brings us together today gives us an excellent opportunity to examine the state of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations and to reflect on how we can strengthen their links of synergy and interaction.

I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for the information he has provided in his summary report on cooperation activities undertaken these past two years (A/63/228). The report clearly shows the genuine will of the United Nations and the regional organizations concerned to consolidate and diversify in various areas and at various levels their cooperation and their capacity to be complementary. My delegation welcomes that fact because it is therein that the objective of full cooperation between United Nations and regional organizations takes on real significance and relevance.

My delegation feels that regional cooperation, the structure and scope of which have become increasingly multidimensional and integrated, is now more than ever a supplementary tool for United Nations action and for the development of multilateralism. Developments on the international scene have clearly shown that the universality of the United Nations and the regional approach can work together towards the same objectives and optimize, upstream and down, their action and capacity to better serve the needs of development, peace and human understanding, and to do so without a conflict of competence or mandate.

Given the growing role that regional organizations play in international governance and in the consensual approach to the situations facing the world, my delegation feels that the organizations involved should, in that respect, be integrated as full partners in the United Nations dynamic. The regional cooperation dimension is also part of the revitalization of the United Nations and the achievement of its development goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals.

We should remember in that respect that the September 2005 World Summit Outcome Document stressed that aspect by recommending that we identify and adopt measures to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Moreover, the various biennial reports adopted under item 114 evidence the growing interest that the United Nations community accords to increasing cooperation and coordination and to the added value that the regional organizations provide at various levels.

Additionally, my delegation would like to take advantage of this debate to remind regional organizations to strengthen consultation and cooperation among themselves, since they are guided by the common ideals of peace, development and dialogue among civilizations.

As a member of a number of regional organizations, Tunisia is convinced that such valuable cooperation in various areas should be duly appreciated, better supported and better structured. In that regard, cooperation activities between the United Nations and the League of Arab States — the vitality and strengthening of which we welcome, particularly in the area of peace — should be further extended to other sectors more directly linked to development. In point of fact, a number of meetings and joint activities have taken place, including the coordination meeting in Geneva in July 2008 between the two parties that led to the launching of various projects of common interest in the economic, social, environmental, technical and cultural domains, attesting to the shared will to strengthen institutional links, as well as the scope of and base for cooperation. The follow-up mechanism established on that occasion is certainly an important pillar in the edifice of cooperation. We would have wished that the report of the Secretary-General had given more information with regard to the mandate and the functioning of that mechanism, in particular its ability to make periodic assessments of the status of cooperation.

My delegation welcomes the fact that, over the past two years, cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union has taken on another dimension and opened up new perspectives. There have been many successes, and we are now attempting to address the specific needs of our continent, particularly in the area of peace and conflict management, in keeping with the priorities established in the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union, presented in the declaration Enhancing United Nations-African Union Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union, the text of which was signed in Addis Ababa in November 2006.

In that respect, the decision to set up a coordination and consultation mechanism between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the Security Council of the United Nations, as well as joint meetings to be held regularly between those two bodies in that framework undoubtedly meets the needs of our time, given that Africa is the theatre of most conflicts, and particularly since it provides edifying proof that structured, targeted and coordinated cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations can contribute to the creation of an African capacity for conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

By dint of the political sensitivity of its basic structure, cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union on the issues of peace and security has monopolized attention, downplaying other aspects of cooperation — such as economic and social support — that while requiring less involvement and fewer resources, are nevertheless important. The goal is to support the process, of development in particular the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, at the national, regional and subregional levels, especially since Africa is clearly behind with regard to the agreed deadlines.

Before concluding on that point, I would like to stress that my delegation can only welcome the significant efforts of the United Nations and its Member States in the area of peace and security in Africa, and hopes that questions of economic and human development will enjoy the same level of attention and commitment. The development of Africa today is at the heart of the United Nations agenda and of the international community.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in diverse and important economic, political, social and humanitarian fields. The OIC and its specialized agencies are deployed in various domains and with numerous partners in order to contribute to the efforts of the international community in the service of development, peace and security.

In that framework, the international conference convened by the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Tunis in November 2007, in cooperation with the Tunisian Government, on the theme "Terrorism: Dimensions, Threats and

Countermeasures", has enabled us to identify solutions, to recommend paths of action and, in particular, to clear up a good number of misunderstandings at the heart of a certain erroneous perception of Islam. The conference illustrated the extent to which cooperation and exchanges enable us to take the road less travelled and to find common ground on subjects that are apparently controversial or even conflictual.

On another level, the meeting held in Geneva in July 2008 between the United Nations system and the OIC and its specialized institutions enabled us to assess the level of cooperation and where it could be strengthened.

It is a fact that the world today faces many challenges, and the fact that they are getting worse is indisputable. The only way the international community can rise to those challenges is with everyone's help, and a collective commitment. The process of complementarity between the universal action of the United Nations and the constructive contribution of regional organizations itself arises from that imperative.

Ms. Negm (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to start by expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his excellent report on the cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/63/228). Egypt attaches special importance to such cooperation for its significant role in helping to achieve the goals of the United Nations in its three main fields of work: international peace and security, development in its political and economic dimensions, and the effective promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Secretary-General's report demonstrates the depth of the relationship between the United Nations and regional and other organizations and the increasing levels of steady cooperation between them. In that context, the delegation of Egypt welcomes the report's focus on the growing cooperation between United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, on the one hand, and the African Union, on the other, in the areas of peace and security; the African Union's institutional capacity-building; mediation and conflict resolution; the holding of elections; peacekeeping and support in implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programmes; disarmament, especially with respect to small arms and light weapons; and other areas associated with the promotion and development of industry, environmental protection, refugee issues, and food and food security.

In the field of development, cooperation must be strengthened between both parties in order to confront the world's exceptional food, energy, global financial markets and climate change crises. Those crises will affect Africa more than another region. I also wish to stress the need to implement the political declaration issued at the recent high-level meeting of the General Assembly on Africa's development needs as well as the proposals put forward by the leaders at the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals. Those proposals aim at increasing financing for Africa and to give it special consideration during the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

In the area of international peace and security, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to form a joint United Nations-African Union panel, chaired by former Italian Prime Minister Prodi, in support of African peacekeeping operations. We look forward to receiving the panel's report. Concurrently, we emphasize the importance of continuing to strengthen cooperation between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union so that Africa can also contribute to maintaining international peace and security in other regions of the world.

In the same context, I would like to refer to the important role played by the Peacebuilding Commission in African countries emerging from conflict and its achievements during the first two years of its existence. The United Nations and the African Union should encourage, sustain and support the Commission's role. We also stress the need to assist and strengthen the capacities of the Commission by providing the necessary financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations, and to take the regional dimension of the process of reviewing the work of the Peacebuilding Fund into consideration in 2009 and 2010, in a manner that would help to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

Cooperation between the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the United Nations is gaining importance in the light of the negative campaign against Islam and its symbols and of the

efforts of some to defend that campaign by citing freedom of expression. This issue requires both organizations to step up their role in correcting the erroneous image of the Islamic world and in deepening cooperation among all peoples, regardless of their religions and faiths. That, in turn, would require working together in the fields of culture and education through dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. In that regard, the delegation of Egypt encourages the holding of seminars and conferences in cooperation with the member States of both organizations so that such cooperation will produce concrete results in promoting the culture of peace. It is our hope that the high-level meeting to be held in the middle of this month will constitute a further basis for strengthening cooperation among all countries in that important area.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States is of equal and increasing importance, not only because of the leading role of the United Nations in the process of the peaceful settlement of the Middle East question and its role in the diplomatic Quartet, but also in promoting the international process of addressing the case of the Palestinian refugees and ensuring their access to urgently needed humanitarian assistance, and in confirming the fact that the United Nations remains at the centre of the political process aimed at establishing an independent, viable Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

In that regard, it is necessary to immediately commence the implementation of the agreement between the two organizations to strengthen the institutional links between their secretariats. The process will lead to the sharing of experience and of lessons learned, promote their joint efforts, and enhance their coordination with other regional organizations for the achievement of international peace and security.

Regarding cooperation between the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) and the United Nations, the delegation of Egypt welcomes the consultations between both organizations in the various fields of international law. The Egyptian delegation reiterates and affirms the importance of strengthening such cooperation, especially with respect to the activities of AALCO's Centre for Research and Training to build capacities in the field of international law in all its branches and to ensure effective national implementation of international law obligations.

The delegation of Egypt also affirms the importance of strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie; of expanding it from merely cultural cooperation to cooperation in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping capacity-building; and of developing, establishing and implementing national strategies for development and other important areas that would enhance the goals of both organizations.

The delegation of Egypt follows with keen interest the growing cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union since the signing of the 1996 Cooperation Agreement between them; the adoption in 2002 of resolution 57/47 granting the Union observer status; the organization of hearings and common interactive debates on the sidelines of successive sessions of the General Assembly; and the participation of parliamentarians in the official delegations of their countries to the General Assembly. That growing cooperation clearly highlights the nature of the organic relationship between strengthening the principles of democracy, ensuring good governance at the national and international levels and broadening the basis for parliamentary participation in the multilateral international sphere.

Owing to the complexity and multifaceted nature of cooperation between the two organizations with regard to participation in relevant United Nations conferences, issues of international peace and security and efforts to promote and enhance economic and social development, democracy and human rights, and given Egypt's leading role in promoting such cooperation during the chairmanship of Mr. Fathi Sorour, Speaker of the People's Assembly, we support the Secretary-General's recommendation, set out in paragraph 139 of the report, that the General Assembly positively consider devoting a specific agenda item to cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Egypt will participate actively in the consultations on that subject, which will be considered during negotiations on the annual draft resolution on this item.

The delegation of Egypt has closely followed the increasing cooperation between the United Nations and many organizations in Europe, Asia and Latin America,

in particular the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the Caribbean Community, the Council of Europe and other organizations covered in the report. We will follow up on efforts to enhance such cooperation in the future with a view to achieving the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Mrs. Ithete (Namibia): The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the world organization of national parliaments, is the natural institutional link between the United Nations and the world of national parliaments. Namibia is particularly honoured that The Honourable Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia, was elected as President of the IPU. We believe that his experience as a former Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and President of the General Assembly will certainly contribute to the strengthening of the partnership between the United Nations and the IPU.

In order to bridge the implementation gap with regard to United Nations decisions and resolutions and to ensure greater democratization of the United Nations system, it is important to engage more closely with national parliaments and parliamentarians all over the world. Such engagement would give parliamentarians a better understanding of the importance of translating international commitments into national legislation and policies. It would also provide greater political momentum for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and addressing the major global challenges of our time.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228) goes a long way in highlighting the importance of cooperation among the United Nations system, national parliaments and the IPU. Namibia supports the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report, particularly those related to the circulation of the outcome document of the joint United Nations-IPU annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations as an official United Nations document and the allocation of a separate General Assembly agenda item to explore cooperation among the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU.

As at previous sessions, the General Assembly will be requested to adopt the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. The draft resolution will, inter alia, encourage the United Nations and the IPU to continue to cooperate closely in various fields — in particular peace and security, economic and social development, international law, human rights and democracy and gender issues — bearing in mind the significant benefits of such cooperation between the two organizations. It will also encourage the IPU's contributions to the work of the General Assembly, including the revitalization of the Assembly, United Nations reform and system-wide coherence. Namibia trusts that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. We therefore urge Member States to support it.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to inform Member States that Namibia will facilitate the negotiations on the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Italy on a job well done in facilitating a similar draft resolution in 2006.

Ms. Chen Peijie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): It is increasingly important that the United Nations, the world's most universal international Organization, enhance its cooperation with other international and regional organizations to address the challenges of globalization and myriad issues in the international arena. The Chinese delegation welcomes the General Assembly's consideration of the important item, "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations". On this occasion, I should like to make some brief comments on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO).

AALCO is the only influential intergovernmental organization that is composed of Asian and African States and dedicated to addressing legal issues. Founded in 1956, it was a major outcome of the famous Bandung Conference of 1955. For more than half a century, AALCO has worked consistently to promote cooperation and exchanges among Asian and African States in the spirit of unity, friendship and cooperation advocated at the Bandung Conference. It assists Asian and African States in the practice of international law and in their efforts to promote the progressive development and codification of such law. Comments and proposals made by AALCO on the relevant items on the agendas of the Sixth Committee and the International Law Commission serve as an important frame of reference for Asian and African States as they participate in discussions on the relevant

General Assembly items and have great reference value for the work of other United Nations legal bodies.

AALCO enjoys good cooperative relations with the United Nations and its relevant organs. Over the years, AALCO and specialized United Nations agencies, such as UNESCO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Law Commission, have sent representatives to one another's meetings to actively participate in the consideration of relevant items. As a result, the cooperation among those bodies has been continuously enhanced and broadened.

Asia and Africa have the largest number of developing countries and the largest populations in the world. Thanks to their efforts over many years, Asian and African countries have achieved enormous progress in the political, economic and social fields. Their status and role in international affairs have grown markedly, which has made them an important force for world peace and shared development. As an important platform for exchange and cooperation, AALCO will no doubt play an increasingly positive role in enhancing the effective participation of Asian and African States in promoting democratization and the rule of law in international relations.

As a State member of both the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, the Chinese Government has consistently supported AALCO's efforts to enhance cooperation and exchanges with the United Nations. From this rostrum, I wish to reiterate that the Chinese Government will, as always, continue to contribute to enhancing cooperation among the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, the United Nations and other relevant organs.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Uganda, on behalf of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), on cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC. However, Senegal, in its capacity as Chair of the OIC Summit at its eleventh session, would like to share with the Assembly some of our thoughts with regard to that cooperation.

The important role of regional organizations and others in dealing with the major issues on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly has been reaffirmed many times since this debate began. In point of fact, whether it is terrorism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, peacebuilding, human rights or even humanitarian action, organizations such as the African Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference are well-placed to understand the deep-seated causes and to provide suitable solutions, either because of their knowledge of the region concerned or because of the particular membership of the organizations.

Let me say that it is with the greatest satisfaction that Senegal notes the continued strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and we welcome the attention paid to the important issues on the OIC agenda by His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as well as his presence in Dakar on 13 March 2008 at the signing of the peace agreement between Chad and the Sudan, which took place on the margins of the OIC Summit. That is a good illustration of that ongoing attention. Added to that is the upcoming high-level meeting of the General Assembly on dialogue here in New York under the auspices of His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, which will provide yet another occasion for those two organizations to strengthen their links.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228) notes in section L of its part II that over and above the relations between the Secretariat and the OIC, the cooperation between that organization and the United Nations has also been extended to other agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, in particular in the form of initiatives taken with UNICEF, the World Meteorological Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We welcome that dynamism, however we also hope that those various areas of cooperation will go beyond simple talks between staff of the respective programmes for each body or agency and actually lead to effective synergies that will have a specific impact on projects on the ground.

In that respect, the OIC's contribution to the World Food Programme in November 2007, the first of its kind, should serve as an example. In that area, Senegal would like to propose that the United Nations, through its competent departments and services, take an active role in the implementation of the OIC programme aimed at providing one half of a million computers to poor countries that are members of the

Organization of the Islamic Conference. Such a programme, if implemented, would constitute a major contribution to the achievement by those countries of the Millennium Development Goals, which are at the heart of the United Nations priorities.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the fact that virtually all of the United Nations interventions in the area of peace and security and humanitarian action are carried out in countries that are also members of the OIC. That shows that these are two preferred areas for the necessary cooperation between those organizations and, for that reason, Senegal will spare no effort during its time in office as Chair of the OIC to increase the number of initiatives and joint actions in those two areas.

Mr. Aligrudić (Serbia): As a State Member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe — of whose Parliamentary Assembly I am a Vice-President — Serbia is a staunch supporter of those organizations. By furthering their goals — the preservation and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law and supporting political, legal and institutional reforms — the Council of Europe and the OSCE make important contributions to conflict prevention, confidence-building and the promotion of peace. Their cooperation with the United Nations is therefore ever so important.

The importance of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations was emphasized at the third Summit of the Council of Europe in Warsaw in 2005. The MDGs, as well as current challenges such as terrorism and other crimes, make it incumbent on the United Nations and the Council of Europe to intensify their cooperation and joint approach, drawing upon hitherto experiences and available resources to deal with those challenges. Those issues help to bring into focus again the validity of the Agreement between the Council of Europe and the United Nations Secretariat signed in 1951.

Cooperation in the field of human rights between the Council of Europe and the United Nations, as well as between the Human Rights Commissioners of the two organizations, should be intensified, particularly in the context of the establishment of international standards and their practical implementation.

Serbia strongly supports the activities of the Council of Europe aimed at promoting respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Kosovo and Metohija, the Serbian province under interim United Nations administration, as well as the Council's activities, aimed at implementing international standards, particularly with respect to members of the non-Albanian communities. All those activities, however, must be designed and implemented in strict compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which provides the only legal basis for the activities of international organizations in Kosovo and Metohija.

Considering that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Council of Europe concluded the Agreement on Technical Arrangements in connection with the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of and National Minorities in August 2004 and that the first monitoring cycle relating to the implementation of the Convention in Kosovo and Metohija was completed by the adoption of a resolution by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 21 June 2006, it is of vital importance to take the appropriate measures contained in the conclusions and recommendations of the resolution. It is equally important to proceed with the provisions of the letter sent by the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe's Framework Convention to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo and Metohija of July 2007 and the report to the Committee on the implementation of the resolution in Kosovo and Metohija. It is all the more important now, as no reply to the letter had been received by May 2008, when a new letter was sent.

Following the conclusion of the Technical Agreement for the implementation of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment between the Council of Europe and UNMIK in August 2004 and the exchange of letters between the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe in 2006, the experts of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture were given the possibility to visit all detention and prison units in Kosovo and Metohija in order to verify whether the provisions of the Convention were being complied with and whether the inspection modalities in the NATO detention units were defined. And the fact that the first visit of the Committee took place in March 2007 provides

eloquent proof that the cooperation of international organizations is needed and is fruitful.

Of exceptional importance to my country are field activities related to the restoration of cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, particularly those conducted by the Independent International Commission for Cultural Heritage, established by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNMIK in the wake of the March 2004 riots against non-Albanians.

The three years of activity of the Reconstruction Implementation Commission with respect to Serbian sacred places has confirmed the Commission's importance for the successful implementation of cultural heritage projects and the promotion of inter-ethnic cooperation and dialogue. Serbia appreciates very much the fact that the Commission's activities are pursued under the auspices of UNMIK and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), with the participation of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Serbia particularly appreciates the Council of Europe's contribution to the Commission's work and expects the Council to continue to play its cooperative role.

The question of refugees continues to be an extremely burdensome problem for Serbia and the entire region of South-Eastern Europe. In order to find lasting and sustainable solutions, it is necessary to intensify cooperation between the United Nations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in order to solve this problem at the regional level, with the full implementation of the Sarajevo Declaration.

Serbia fully supports the continuation of the activities of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and Metohija within its current mandate, under the auspices of UNMIK and on the basis of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). This means that the activities of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo must be status-neutral. It is of particular importance that that Mission not facilitate by its activities the building and functioning of those institutions created through the unilateral declaration of independence of the province. Serbia expects the OSCE Mission in Kosovo to become increasingly engaged in addressing one of the most critical issues for Kosovo and Metohija: the security and status of the non-Albanian ethnic communities which live in very difficult conditions. In that connection, it is necessary that, in addition to developing democratic institutions and the rule of law, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo accentuates in its activities the improvement of the status of the ethnic groups discriminated against. This implies respect for human rights, security, freedom of movement, property and labour rights, health protection and education. We call on the OSCE Mission in Kosovo to devote special attention to communities living in enclaves and to support the Serbian proposal to establish new municipalities which would reduce the level of isolation of the population living in the enclaves.

A comprehensive programme for the sustainable return of internally displaced persons must be drawn up, to which the OSCE Mission in Kosovo may render a significant contribution through cooperation with competent Serbian institutions and international organizations.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo should also support the protection of the property rights and individual tenancy rights of the members of ethnic communities discriminated against; ensure property restitution and compensation for destroyed or inaccessible property; and make sure that the rights of the State of Serbia to privatized property or property to be privatized are respected. There is no doubt that the respect and protection of those rights are among the preconditions for the safe and sustainable return of internally displaced persons to their homes.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo should invest additional efforts in improving the situation of the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija. Those efforts would be particularly important in establishing an appropriate judiciary system in those parts of the province whose population refuses to recognize the secessionist Government.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the question of the destiny of missing persons, namely Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, particularly in the light of the testimony published in the book by Carla Del Ponte, former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. I therefore urge UNMIK to do its utmost to ensure that all cases are properly investigated.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/6 of 17 October 1989, I now call on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Terry Davis.

Mr. Davis (Council of Europe): Some people argue that a world facing economic turmoil and terrorist threats should have other priorities than human rights. They could not be more wrong.

Recession and terrorism are two very different things, but they both cause insecurity and fear. They both put a strain on relations among people and among peoples. It is at times like these that there is an even greater need for the values of humanity; a greater need for justice, for equality, for solidarity, for tolerance and for mutual respect, both among people and among peoples.

History has taught us a harsh lesson every time this simple truth has been forgotten or ignored. It was with that truth in mind that, 60 years ago, this General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And it was with this truth in mind that, 60 years ago, a group of European countries established the Council of Europe and, two years later, adopted the European Convention on Human Rights.

Today, the General Assembly is discussing draft resolution A/63/L.12, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe. I hope that it will receive the broadest possible support. Its content reflects the work which the Council of Europe is doing to protect, promote and expand in Europe the values and ideals which are common to us all. In our endeavour, the United Nations is a most important and valuable partner. Our cooperation is continuous, close, wide-ranging, specific and meaningful.

The draft resolution contains a more detailed description of where our cooperation stands today and where we would like to take it tomorrow. It refers to our activities, standards, achievements and objectives, about all of which we feel very strongly. Some are universally accepted; others, less so. But they were included to inspire dialogue, not to dictate.

One omission from the draft resolution is a reference to the abolition of the death penalty. At the Council of Europe, we regard the death penalty as one of the most inhumane and degrading forms of punishment. Only one country in Europe, in fact the only European country which is not a member of the Council of Europe, still uses the death penalty and we look forward to its abolition there as well.

This is a good illustration of the fact that Europe is not alone. We know that we are part of the majority here in the United Nations General Assembly. That makes my final point for me: the Council of Europe does not presume to lecture or to impose its ideas and values on the rest of the world; that was the old imperialist attitude of Europe. Today we recognize that we are only one part of the world. We are proud of our values but we are not too proud to admit that we can learn from other continents. We want to work together with the rest of the world to define our common values and translate them into reality. In short, we want to work together with the United Nations to change the world. I hope for the Assembly's support.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/18 of 10 November 1978 and General Assembly decision 53/453 of 18 December 1998, I now call on the permanent observer of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Camara (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I have taken the floor, I should like, on behalf of Mr. Abdou Diouf, Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), and on my own behalf, to congratulate the President of the General Assembly and the other Assembly officers on the trust placed in them to lead the work of the sixty-third session. The Secretary-General of the OIF also requested that I commend His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his excellent relationship with the OIF, for the quality of his report (A/63/228) and for his constant availability. Indeed, the two Secretaries-General have met three times in less than two years, which attests to the excellent relations between the two organizations.

I thank the Group of Francophone Ambassadors, who, since the moment that I arrived, have made me feel welcome and have given me all the individual and collective support that an organization can expect from its members. In particular, I congratulate the representatives of Latvia and the Kingdom of Thailand, which recently joined the OIF. On behalf of the OIF Secretary-General, I assure them that they will find friendship and solidarity there.

Because of the comprehensiveness of the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/228) regarding

cooperation between the United Nations and the OIF. I need not list the significant results achieved in that area over the past two years. As members will have noted in the report, the OIF's activities seek to strengthen the pillars of the United Nations: security, development and human rights.

I should like to quickly emphasize the areas in which the OIF would particularly like to highlight its cooperation with the United Nations in the coming years: consolidating activities related to early warning, preventive diplomacy and the OIF's mediation at a seminar following up on the Paris meeting, which was mentioned this morning; further strengthening the peacekeeping capacities of French-speaking States and encouraging them to contribute military contingents that include police and civilian components; increasing electoral assistance and monitoring to consolidate the rule of law and assist democratic transitions; and promoting swifter ratification of major international instruments, in particular the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by all French-speaking countries and whose twentieth anniversary will be commemorated in 2009.

The OIF regrets the fact that the francophone community is affected by several crisis situations. We are convinced of the added value of our organization and its ability to make a specific contribution to the resolution of those crises in accordance, of course, with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the sovereignty of States.

Therefore, in close cooperation with the United Nations, the OIF will strive to increase its efforts to promote the rule of law and the restoration of constitutional order whenever necessary, in conformity with the Bamako Declaration; to promote implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement as well as stability in Chad, the Great Lakes region, Lebanon and Haiti; and to assist the inclusive political dialogue process in the Central African Republic.

The OIF participates actively in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission within its country-specific configurations for Burundi, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau. Here, we commend the respective Chairs of those configurations and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

The Quebec summit, which was, as recalled earlier, the first North-South forum of heads of State or Government to meet following the outbreak of the financial crisis, called for reform of the international financial system through efforts to find sustainable and viable solutions within inclusive forums, taking into account the concerns and sensitivities felt in all regions throughout the world. In that regard, the OIF commends the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to establish an expert group to express independent views in relevant forums. The OIF hopes that French-speaking experts will be more closely involved in seeking solutions to that terrible crisis.

Given the seriousness of environmental challenges and climate change, the OIF reaffirms its support for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Road Map. We are working towards the common goal of at least a 50 per cent reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and are continuing, within the framework of the negotiations under United Nations auspices, to seek a global consensus on concrete objectives more closely aligned with the scenarios formulated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Based on the shared values of peace, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as well as the sharing of the French language, the OIF is particularly sensitive to respect for the status of languages. That demand and that vigilance, which we share with all other linguistic groups, is reflected in the implementation of resolution 61/266, on multilingualism, which is understood as achieving parity among the six official languages of the Organization and between the two working languages of the Secretariat. The twofold commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Year of Languages highlights all the meaning and importance of that principle.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, has already shown the way forward. Within a very short period of time, by virtue of his personal commitment and political resolve, he has made statements that have taken into account the reality of diversity. Can the Secretary-General's example be followed and strengthened to serve the peoples of the United Nations?

In addition to his personal commitment, the Secretary-General followed up on one of the General Assembly's recommendations by appointing Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, as Coordinator for Multilingualism to strengthen the United Nations as a forum to set a global agenda. The OIF congratulates Mr. Akasaka and assures him of its availability and support. Promoting diversity illustrates the old adage: instead of being right alone, let us be right together; let us prefer being right collectively to being right individually.

The women and men who, in the silence of booths and behind computer keyboards, are busy manipulating countless documents — those without whom conferences and seminars would be monotonous and monolingual and who work tirelessly to enable us to understand and listen to one another — those women and men, the translators, interpreters, editors, proofreaders and supervisors of the language and conference services of the United Nations system, who restore to the world its plural identity and linguistic diversity, deserve our undivided attention and full consideration. On behalf of the International Organization of la Francophone, I salute them.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/2 of 13 October 1980, I now call on the observer for the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

Mr. Narinder Singh (Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization): It is my privilege and honour, on behalf of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) and in my capacity as President of the forty-seventh session of AALCO, to address this Assembly, the most representative and democratic forum of the world.

I extend my sincere congratulations to the Assembly President and to his colleagues in the Bureau on their elections to those high offices. We are confident that, with his wisdom and experience, he will steer the session to a very successful outcome.

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization was one of the tangible outcomes of the historic Bandung Conference, which took place in 1955. It linked together States of the Asian and African regions, sending a message to the world that whatever may be the differences in our political, economic or legal systems, we are inextricably linked together as an Asian-African identity. That message of Bandung has had a lasting appeal, which for years has brought Asian-African countries together in various world forums.

AALCO has been promoting Asian-African cooperation on legal matters during the 52 years of its existence. The organization was originally founded by seven States and has grown over time to comprise 47 member States and two observers. We look forward to enlarging our membership even further, so that we may become more representative and better promote the views and concerns of the member States of the region. I take this opportunity to call upon other countries from Asia and Africa to consider becoming members of AALCO.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1) acknowledged that many of today's threats recognize no national boundaries, are interlinked and must be tackled at the global, regional and national levels in accordance with the Charter and international law, and that regional and other organizations can play a key role in helping the United Nations face those global challenges. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations should seek to capitalize on the strength of each organization and should be complementary.

AALCO complements the work of the United Nations in the progressive development and codification of international law. AALCO provides an opportunity to a large number of Asian and African countries to contribute actively to the strengthening of the rule of law in international relations. It has undertaken various studies on international legal issues of common concern and has, in cooperation with the United Nations, played a significant role in harmonizing the positions of Asian and African countries in the legal area.

AALCO held its forty-sixth and forty-seventh annual sessions in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2007 and New Delhi, India, in 2008, respectively, and during those sessions a number of items on our agenda complemented the work of the United Nations. At both those sessions, we considered the work of the International Law Commission, the law of the sea, the status and treatment of refugees, cooperation against trafficking in women and children, human rights, terrorism, the environment and the United Nations Convention against Corruption. At the Cape Town

session, we focused special attention on the ongoing Doha Round of trade negotiations and on international cooperation in countering terrorism, while at the New Delhi session, the topic for special consideration was issues in international humanitarian law.

The forty-seventh session of AALCO gave rise to mandates that are pertinent to the work of the United Nations. For example, the secretariat has been asked to conduct a study to find durable solutions to refugee problems. On international terrorism, the AALCO Secretary-General is exploring the possibility of holding a workshop in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to deal with legal aspects of countering terrorism. The secretariat is considering preparing model legislation to implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 2003, while the work on model legislation against trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is well on its way to completion.

The topic of climate change was a priority issue at our most recent session, and the secretariat has been mandated to follow up on the ongoing negotiations for an international agreement on stronger action on climate change for the period beyond 2012, as laid down in the Bali Action Plan. In addition, AALCO will hold a one-day seminar entitled "Sixty Years of the International Law Commission" in New Delhi on 2 December 2008. The wide range of topics on AALCO's agenda clearly illustrates the capacity of the organization to contribute positively to collective efforts aimed at tackling the new challenges facing the international community.

In order to assist in the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law in the Asian-African region, AALCO has launched an annual training programme on general international law, whose first session will run from 3 to 14 November 2008 at its headquarters in New Delhi. We hope to strengthen that programme further with the support of the relevant United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations University and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, with which we are working closely.

We need to mobilize all our resources to address the tremendous global challenges facing humankind. Undoubtedly, strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is a key element in that respect. Expanding relations between the United Nations and AALCO could also serve that objective and contribute to fulfilling the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

In conclusion, may I express our hope and expectation for enhanced future cooperation between our two organizations in all areas of common concern and in the best interests of our Member States. Finally, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/63/228) on the subject.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, His Excellency Mr. Anders Johnsson.

Mr. Johnsson (Inter-Parliamentary Union): Last month, Sir, one of the predecessors of the President of the General Assembly and today the Speaker of the Parliament of Namibia, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, was elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). He has asked me to deliver these remarks on his and the IPU's behalf and to assure the President that he looks forward to working very closely with him in strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

As the latest report (A/63/228) of the United Nations Secretary-General amply attests, cooperation between our two organizations over the past two years has been substantive and widespread. It has covered international peace and security, development, finance and trade, democracy, gender and human rights.

I do not propose to dwell on the details of this broad agenda, but I would like to highlight a few points of particular relevance for our future work together. Two years ago the General Assembly adopted an ambitious resolution (resolution 61/6) on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which welcomed the efforts, then under way, for a greater parliamentary contribution to the work of the United Nations. It urged the IPU to play an active role in relation to the newly established United Nations bodies, in particular the Peacebuilding Commission, the Development Cooperation Forum and the Human Rights Council. I am pleased to report that good progress is being made on all of these fronts.

Since then, the IPU has been working closely with the Peacebuilding Commission, based on the common understanding that a key prerequisite for

lasting peace is the establishment of strong institutions of good governance. From this perspective, the institution of parliament, as a forum for national reconciliation where political parties from the majority and opposition can forge a consensus on national development objectives, requires particular attention. The IPU will continue to work with the Commission, with a view to more fully engaging national parliaments in the countries under consideration by the Commission in efforts to promote democratic governance, national dialogue and reconciliation. At the risk of stating the obvious, I will add that democracy will not flourish in a country where the parliament is neglected.

The IPU is also closely following the work of the Human Rights Council, particularly as it relates to the universal periodic review of the fulfilment of human rights obligations and commitments by United Nations Member States. As I speak here today, members of parliamentary human rights bodies are meeting at IPU headquarters in Geneva for discussions with the Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a programme of action for parliamentary participation in the review. This is part of our work to secure deeper involvement by parliaments everywhere in the international human rights monitoring and follow-up mechanisms. It means involving members of parliament at an early stage when the periodic country reports to be submitted to the United Nations are being drafted. It involves submitting the conclusions and recommendations that emanate from those main monitoring bodies to parliament for further consideration and action by them, and it involves consolidating the oversight function of parliament as it relates to the implementation of international commitments.

As far as the Economic and Social Council Development Cooperation Forum is concerned, the IPU has played a part in shaping its agenda and working procedures. In June we convened the parliamentary segment of a Stakeholder Forum on the role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness. Its report was introduced to the Development Cooperation Forum at its first substantive session here in New York this July, and it helped influence the outcome of the third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. Indeed, the Accra Agenda for Action speaks clearly about the responsibility of parliaments to help design national development plans, ensuring greater transparency in public financial management and overseeing sound mutual assessment reviews.

The Secretary-General's report offers many examples of the IPU helping to mobilize parliaments in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The newly elected IPU President, who, as President of the General Assembly, presided over the drafting of the Millennium Declaration, is committed to redoubling that effort. Under his leadership, the IPU will also pursue the parliamentary campaign that it launched last year to build political momentum in support of the current negotiations to address climate change.

General Assembly resolution 61/6 also called for the development, as joint United Nations-Inter-Parliamentary Union events, of the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations and other specialized parliamentary meetings in the context of major United Nations conferences. Each year we hold a parliamentary meeting during the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women, seeking to mobilize parliamentary action on the main issue under consideration by the Commission. This year's high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS was accompanied by an IPU-United Nations Development Programme-UNAIDS organized parliamentary meeting that yielded some very practical policy recommendations for parliaments. This is the second year that the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations will be convened jointly by the President of the United Nations General Assembly and the President of the IPU. One of the subjects on our agenda for the hearing this November is the responsibility to protect, on which we expect a lively and constructive exchange of views. The United Nations Secretary-General recommends, in his report, that the report of this hearing be circulated as an official United Nations document, a proposal with which, needless to say, the IPU concurs. We very much hope that we can rely on your support as well.

Last week the President convened an interactive panel discussion for the General Assembly on the subject of the global financial crisis. Two weeks earlier, members of the 154 parliaments represented in the IPU held a similar debate on the occasion of the 119th IPU Assembly. The resolution they adopted on that occasion calls for a truly global and multilateral response to a crisis that extends far beyond the world of finance. The resolution refers repeatedly to the need

to ensure justice, transparency and accountability. It calls on parliaments to make sure that safeguards are in place to avoid the emergence of similar crises in the future and, more generally, it invites parliaments to exercise greater democratic oversight of finance and the economy. The resolution also exhorts Governments to remain vigilant, notwithstanding the crisis, in meeting international commitments to implement the MDGs and similar internationally agreed development goals. It concludes by giving us a mandate to organize, as soon as possible, a global parliamentary conference to examine the causes of the crisis and to suggest avenues for dealing with its consequences. We very much hope to be able to count on your support and cooperation when we carry this proposal forward.

When the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session took up office, he singled out democratization of the United Nations as one of the main themes for consideration by the General Assembly in the year ahead. We can only welcome his decision, as it is a theme to which the IPU itself has been paying considerable attention.

Two years ago, when we last addressed the General Assembly on the question of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU, the second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament had recently taken place here at United Nations Headquarters in this very Hall. The parliamentary leaders then issued a political declaration entitled "Bridging the democracy gap in international relations: A stronger role for parliaments". They expressed support for United Nations reform, including the revitalization of the General Assembly and a more representative Security Council, and they gave voice to the need to make the United Nations more democratic and accountable to the people it serves throughout the world. They suggested that cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU needed to be significantly strengthened and developed into a strategic partnership for that to happen.

As the Secretary-General's report suggests, this agenda can be advanced through a regular exchange between the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the senior leadership of the IPU, with a view to building greater coherence in the work of the two organizations. However, it also needs to be placed at the forefront of deliberations here at the United Nations. The IPU is ready to engage in such a discussion, and we invite the General Assembly to join us. In his report, the Secretary-General suggests that the Assembly may wish to devote a specific agenda item to this issue. We trust that Member States will be ready to support this proposal. It would be one important way in which the Assembly can advance its agenda of democratizing the United Nations.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/5 of 8 October 1999, I now call on His Excellency Mr. Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

Mr. Chrysanthopoulos (Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization): The foundations of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) were laid down in 1992 as a political initiative for economic cooperation in the wake of tremendous changes that had taken place in the world. It was a period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The founding fathers of BSEC wanted to create an organization that could promote peace and stability in the Black Sea region through prosperity.

In those 16 years, BSEC has become a forum for discussion and cooperation in a wide range of areas, namely, energy, transport, trade and economic development, small and medium-sized enterprises, environment, tourism, culture, education, science and technology, telecommunications, pharmaceutics, agriculture, emergency relief and elimination of the consequences of natural and human-made disasters, as well as combating organized crime and terrorism.

Furthermore, BSEC has built a permanent and extensive institutional framework of cooperation that covers all levels of governance. BSEC has also elaborated binding agreements and common action plans on key issues of regional cooperation. The Agreement on Combating Organized Crime and its protocols, the agreements on cooperation in emergency situations and the agreements on simplification of visa procedures for business-people and for professional lorry driver nationals are some examples.

Today, BSEC is in the process of implementing regional projects of major significance for the Black Sea region, as well as for the Eurasian region. These include the Black Sea Ring Highway project and the project on the development of the motorways of the sea in the BSEC region. The memoranda of understanding related to those projects were signed in 2007. The two projects pertain to the development of transport links in

the region. They are expected to do much to foster intra-BSEC trade, as well as tourism, infrastructure, transport investments and economic prosperity among the countries of the Black Sea. Most importantly, they will make a concrete positive difference in the lives of the people of the region and bring them closer together — which should be an objective of all international and regional organizations.

The Black Sea Ring Highway project envisages a four-lane ring highway system, approximately 7,100 kilometres long, to connect BSEC member States with one another. The project on the development of the motorways of the sea in the BSEC region concerns strengthening the maritime links among the ports of BSEC member States. That project will make the Black Sea smaller by creating the necessary infrastructure for better connecting the Black Sea ports and the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and the Caspian Seas.

At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly, by its resolution 54/5 of 8 October 1999, granted observer status to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. Subsequently, General Assembly resolution 55/211 of 20 December 2000, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, opened up new avenues for BSEC to develop working relationships with other organizations within the United Nations system and beyond.

Since then, BSEC has signed cooperation agreements with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). BSEC has also developed cooperation with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

I wish to give a brief summary of the development of relations between BSEC and the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system during the 2007-2008 period. Within the framework of our cooperation with UNDP, the Black Sea Trade and Investment Promotion Programme (BSTIP) was launched in December 2006. BSTIP is the first partnership project between UNDP and BSEC and the first programme jointly financed by Turkey and Greece under the auspices of UNDP.

The overall aim of the Programme is to support economic growth and development in the Black Sea subregion through closer economic integration and to expand intraregional trade and investment links among BSEC member States. BSTIP is expected to have a positive impact on the reduction of poverty as well. New partnerships will be developed with business support organizations. The beneficiaries of BSTIP are small and medium-sized enterprises and special emphasis is given to enterprises managed by young and women entrepreneurs. The Programme is being implemented in cooperation with local chambers of commerce and business support organizations in each of the BSEC countries.

As far as our cooperation with UNODC is concerned, the first joint BSEC-UNODC project has just recently been completed. The BSEC Regional Action Plan for Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Persons in the Black Sea Region is a concrete product of that cooperation. That BSEC Regional Action Plan aims at promoting expertise and best practices exchange as well as enhancing cooperation among BSEC member States in combating human trafficking. Along with its policy development and capacity-building aspects, the Action Plan gives special consideration to three basic elements in fighting human trafficking, namely, prevention, protection and prosecution.

As part of our cooperation with IOM, we recently completed a joint BSEC-IOM project on migration management. A concrete outcome of that cooperation was that the Migration Policy Recommendations for the Black Sea Region were developed and adopted by BSEC. The main purpose of the Recommendations is to encourage the creation of a framework for BSEC member States for sharing expertise and best practices in migration policies in view of preventing irregular migration flows and simultaneously facilitating legal ones. The establishment of cooperation between BSEC and UNIDO's International Centre for Hydrogen Energy Technology is another positive development.

I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his factual report on the status of cooperative relationships between BSEC and various United Nations organizations during 2007 and 2008 (A/67/228). We appreciate his recommendation that the

United Nations, the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system should continue to hold consultations with BSEC and formulate and implement joint programmes pertaining to fields of common interest.

On 25 June 2007, BSEC celebrated its fifteenth anniversary with a summit in Istanbul. Almost all heads of State or Government of BSEC member States attended. This high level of participation was a reflection of the political support provided by the member States as well as the strong credibility of the organization.

One of the most important conclusions of the summit, which finds its reflection in the summit declaration, concerns the redefinition of the focus and priorities of BSEC in certain areas of cooperation where we can derive tangible results, such as environmental protection, trade, transport, tourism, energy, telecommunications, science and technology and the fight against all forms of organized crime.

In the declaration, the heads of State and Government of BSEC member States reiterated their commitment to contribute to the attainment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals at national, regional and global levels and instructed the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to examine possible steps for the achievement of those goals in the BSEC region. Within that framework, cooperation is envisaged with UNICEF and UNDP.

The consequences of the ongoing global financial crisis are of concern to all of us. Measures need to be taken by all BSEC member States to safeguard their financial institutions so that economic development in the BSEC region is not impeded. The BSEC Working Group on Banking and Finance will be convened on 18 November to assess the situation.

This assessment will allow the member States that have taken measures to protect their financial institutions to share that information with those member States that have not yet been affected at the same level by the financial crisis.

The global food crisis is one of the themes in the debate at this session of the General Assembly, and it is also being addressed by our organization. Within the BSEC working group on agriculture and agro-industry, BSEC member States have considered the situation concerning the consequences of the increase in food prices and the actions that may be undertaken in order to reverse such an increase. Acknowledging that the increase in food prices is a worldwide trend that affects both developed and developing countries, the working group identified various causes that lead to the increase.

In addition to our efforts to achieve food security, another area where BSEC wishes to contribute is the improvement of respect, understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples of different cultures and religions and to counter the forces that fuel polarization. We believe that any effort in this direction is valuable in promoting sustained peace, security and stability. It is within this framework that BSEC has decided to open exploratory contacts with the Alliance of Civilizations.

Before concluding, I would like to pay tribute to the Republic of Albania, the previous chair-in-office of BSEC, for drafting and introducing the draft resolution that is now before the General Assembly (A/63/L.9). I also wish to thank the sponsors of the text and hope it will be adopted by consensus. Adoption of this draft resolution will give new impetus to BSEC's cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and others in the pursuit of the objectives and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as well as those contained in the BSEC charter. BSEC will continue to play its role with determination in efforts to strengthen multilateral cooperation to meet the global challenges of this millennium.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 477(V) of 1 November 1950, I now call on the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States.

Mr. Mahmassani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to commend Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the report that he has presented to this session (A/63/228) on the close and multifaceted cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations in confronting the challenges and risks posed to international peace and security.

The League of Arab States and its specialized agencies are working on continuing and intensifying their various facets of cooperation with the United

Nations, as set forth in the Secretary-General's report. The most recent meeting between representatives of the United Nations and the League of Arab States took place in Geneva in early July 2008 and covered several political issues. It also discussed and proposed joint projects in the economic, environmental, social, humanitarian, cultural and technical fields, as well as in the area of capacity-building. In addition, participants agreed to form a mechanism to follow up United Nations and Arab League resolutions; bolster institutional ties between their two secretariats so as to exchange experience, expertise and lessons learned; and raise the level of joint efforts for conflict prevention.

The United Nations Secretary-General has supported the Arab League's initiative and proposals to end the political crisis in Lebanon. Cooperation between the two organizations over the Iraqi issue has primarily focused on establishing and activating an expanded regional dialogue that was initiated in Sharm el-Sheikh in 2007. The Arab League has also cooperated closely with the United Nations on the launching and implementation of the International Compact with Iraq. This cooperation involves several joint undertakings, including projects in the fields of commerce, investment, finance, agriculture, water, sustainable development and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In the field of industrial development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization has been cooperating with the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization. Projects related to the environment have included implementation of the sustainable development initiative in the Arab region, as well as efforts to implement resolutions of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

In addition, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), together with the Arab League, has implemented a special capacity-building project in the field of evaluating development strategies aimed at achieving the MDGs in the Arab region. Last March, DESA, working in collaboration with the Western Asia regional office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Arab League, organized, in Abu Dhabi the first Round Table Meeting of Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Arab Region. Participants stressed the importance of cooperation between the two organizations and the need to build confidence in the dialogue among civilizations, as well as bolster their alliance and maintain the values of peaceful coexistence and human dignity.

In this context, the Alliance of Civilizations signed a memorandum of understanding with the Arab League in order to encourage cooperation in various fields, including an initiative to support human rights, tolerance and the exchange of new practices, as well as finding opportunities to enrich dialogue between different cultures and religions.

The Arab League's efforts to intensify full cooperation with the United Nations in all fields makes it eager to continue consultations and discussions in order to search for all possible ways and means to guarantee the implementation of all resolutions issued by the Organization, whether related to disarmament, combating terrorism or to the peaceful settlement of conflict.

The most important priority for the Arab League is to find a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. Strengthening cooperation between the two organizations will reinforce ongoing efforts to confront international dangers and challenges and maintain international peace and security. Moreover, it would guarantee a Middle East region free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy.

Cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations emanates from a deep-rooted traditional Arab culture which calls for tolerance and peaceful coexistence with others through dialogue among civilizations. The draft resolution to be presented to the General Assembly under this agenda item, on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States (A/63/L.20), would strengthen the principles of cooperation between the two organizations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 114 and its sub-items (a) to (u).

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/63/L.7, A/63/L.9, A/63/L.10, A/63/L.11, A/63/L.12 and A/63/L.13.

Draft resolution A/63/L.7 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: the Congo, Gabon, Syrian Arab Republic and Mongolia. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.7?

Draft resolution A/63/L.7 was adopted (resolution 63/10).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/63/L.9 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Montenegro and Serbia. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.9?

Draft resolution A/63/L.9 was adopted (resolution 63/11).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/63/L.10 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: Belize, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica and Panama. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.10?

Draft resolution A/63/L.10 was adopted (resolution 63/12).

The Acting President: We shall now turn to draft resolution A/63/L.11, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

United States of America

Draft resolution A/63/L.11 was adopted by 64 votes to 1 (resolution 63/13).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, the Netherlands, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United Kingdom advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/63/L.12 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.12?

Draft resolution A/63/L.12 was adopted (resolution 63/14).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/63/L.13 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.13?

Draft resolution A/63/L.13 was adopted (resolution 63/15).

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus to speak in explanation of position.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus welcomes the adoption of draft resolution A/63/L.12, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe. In the resolution, the General Assembly rightly pays tribute to the Council of Europe for its advancement and protection of human rights, including for its work on the issue of trafficking in human beings.

We are happy to see mention of the entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. However, the list of parties to that important document and to a number of other international treaties of the Council of Europe on issues of combating crime is in fact limited to the member States of the Council of Europe. Because of various circumstances, not all States that could and would wish to make a meaningful contribution to achieving the goals of the Convention have access to the mechanisms of cooperation contained in it.

One means of developing cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, especially in combating human trafficking, would be for the United Nations to promote a global plan of action on that topic. As is the case with the aforementioned Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, not all States are parties to other international documents in the area of combating human trafficking, including the Palermo Protocol to Prevent Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. We believe that a United Nations plan of action to combat human trafficking, designed to draw in all Member States, could combine valuable experience in the implementation of various regional and international documents in that area in a clear and open plan for multilateral cooperation, with a genuinely global nature.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-items (b), (d), (g), (j), (m) and (t) of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 114 and its sub-items (a), (c), (e), (f), (h), (i), (k), (l), (n) to (s) and (u).

The Acting President: Before proceeding to the next item on our agenda, I would like to appeal to those Member States intending to submit draft resolutions on the remaining sub-items to do so as soon as possible.

Agenda item 59

Holocaust remembrance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/316)

Ms. Halpern (United States of America): Albert Einstein once said "The world is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil but because of the people who don't do anything about it". Einstein was referring to the deafening silence that prevailed throughout the world while the Holocaust — the systematic slaughter of innocents by the Nazis — was taking place.

The lessons of the Holocaust are as real in our day as they were 70 years ago, on the eve of Kristallnacht. In every generation tyrants rise up to test the will of the world. They know from studying the rise of Hitler that it is possible to promise unspeakable acts of violence and yet not be opposed. They know that the world has the capacity to stand by and let evil flourish. But they must also know that we too have studied history and that we too have learned lessons from it. The passage of resolution 60/7 by the General Assembly three years ago, on 1 November 2005, is proof of that. That resolution sets a new course for international action to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust and to confront the threat of genocide in our own day.

The United States welcomes the release of the Secretary-General's recent report on the United Nations Outreach Programme and is pleased to acknowledge the excellent work done so far to implement the full range of activities called for by

resolution 60/7. The efforts to educate, conduct outreach and help raise generations free from the bonds of hatred are much needed and form the basis of the work of the United Nations at all levels.

The Outreach Programme is to be commended for the creative platforms it has used in order to reach across the broad spectrum of diverse societies, including seminars, briefings and round tables, online educational curricula, film screenings, exhibits and concerts. Such an all-encompassing approach to Holocaust remembrance will prove to be indispensable to the education of today's young people to the dangers inherent in hatred and bigotry and to the horrors of what humankind is capable of doing to one another.

The United States is proud to be a committed participant in those Outreach Programme efforts. American educators, film-makers, musicians, institutes of higher education, museums and foundations have contributed their resources and talents to the success of this Programme.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for example, has been an active partner with the United Nations Programme. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has organized training seminars for United Nations information officers serving in the field. The work of memorializing the Holocaust and the prevention of future genocides must be an abiding concern for all free nations because the threat in our own time is very real.

The same underlying issues of State-sponsored hatred and intolerance which led to the Holocaust are as dangerous today as they were then. The false and anti-Semitic libels that flourished in Europe before the Second World War now find new audiences throughout the world. The dignity and value of each individual must be respected and protected in order to prevent future acts of genocide. The Outreach Programme and all of the countries that have participated to date are to be commended for their tireless efforts in spreading that message.

Despite the adoption of resolution 60/7, it remains inexplicable that one of the Member States, Iran, continues to insist upon denying the truth of the Holocaust. As the United States has stated many times before, to deny the Holocaust is tantamount to approving the extermination of the Jewish people in particular, and to approving genocide in general. That is unacceptable and unconscionable.

If the denial of the Holocaust does prove anything, it is that the lessons of that incomprehensible, tragic event in human history remain unlearned. It is for that reason that the Outreach Programme is especially important. We hope that the Programme will continue to expand and provide the necessary resources to counter intolerance and hatred while promoting understanding and respect. The United Nations will continue to support that essential mission.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon could not have been more correct in stating that it is not enough to remember, honour and grieve for the dead. As we do, we must also educate, nurture and care for the living. We must foster in our children a sense of responsibility so that they can build societies that protect and promote the rights of all civilians.

It is a simple truth, an eternal truth and a truth worth defending against all those who seek to infringe upon it. For if we do not affirm and protect the right of every human being to live in a world free from baseless hatred, racism and bigotry, we can never claim to be an organization of united nations.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): At the outset, please allow me to thank the President for convening this meeting.

One week from today, the United Nations will mark the 70th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom — the Night of Broken Glass — a single night that served as a prelude to the Holocaust. On that night, organized gangs of Nazi rioters and their supporters rampaged throughout Germany, destroying more than a thousand synagogues, as well as thousands of Jewish shops and businesses. In the massive pogrom, Jews were murdered and many thousands more were sent to concentration camps.

The anniversary we commemorate is one of many activities of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme. It has been organized since its inception, following the adoption in November 2005 of resolution 60/7, entitled "Holocaust remembrance".

The resolution was a historic and universal achievement that signalled the first acknowledgement by the United Nations of the tragedy that befell the Jewish people during the years of the Second World War. Indeed, other peoples, cultures and nations also suffered severely from Nazi atrocities. However, let us not forget that no other nation lost such an enormous

proportion of its people as did the Jewish people. In the words of Elie Weisel, "Not all victims were Jews. But all Jews were victims".

The Secretary-General's report before us (A/63/316) details the impressive work of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme of the Department of Public Information, under the leadership of Mr. Kiyo Akasaka and his predecessor, Mr. Shashi Tharoor. Israel commends their valuable work and dedication and will continue to support and cooperate with Mr. Akasaka and his staff.

The State of Israel and the Jewish people appreciate the historic resolution unanimously adopted by the General Assembly three years ago regarding Holocaust remembrance. Yet the resolution and the Secretary-General's report are not ends unto themselves. Holocaust remembrance must be a dynamic and ongoing effort that requires our commitment to adapting the lessons of the Nazi genocide to evolving threats in our times.

Thus, we cannot ignore the troubling reality that today — more than 60 years after the Holocaust — we have heard from this very rostrum a leader of a Member State who calls for the destruction of another Member State and denies the historical realities of the Holocaust. In this Hall, all Member States swore: "Never again". It is therefore incumbent upon us not merely to condemn such statements, but to act immediately and with resolve against a Member State whose leaders declare such despicable and dangerous words. For in the end, the Nazi Holocaust did not begin in the gas chambers. That is where it ended. The Nazi Holocaust began with the dangerous words of men.

Israel wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his work, as detailed in the report, and my delegation continues to offer its assistance to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust continue to promote peace, coexistence and tolerance.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Humankind recalls the terrible crimes of Nazism with indignation and grief. The bloodiest of those crimes was the Holocaust. In my country, we remember those who fell victim to Nazism, including the six million killed in the Holocaust, half of whom were citizens of the Soviet Union.

Russia considers the Holocaust to be not only the national tragedy of the Jewish people, but a catastrophe of humankind as a whole. Current and future generations must understand who encouraged that horrific crime and who committed it. It is unacceptable to whitewash the actions of those who participated in the crimes of Nazism and were condemned by the Nuremberg trials, first and foremost, the members of the Schutzstaffel, the ideologues and executors of the Holocaust.

Thus we are very worried about the chauvinistic and pro-Nazi tendencies in certain countries, which pose a threat to democracy and human rights. In civilized countries, it must be unacceptable to glorify the memory of Fascism's accomplices — the legionaries of the Waffen SS and other collaborators — who destroyed the lives of hundreds of thousands of peaceful citizens, prisoners of war and concentration camp internees. It is also our responsibility to pay tribute to all the soldiers who died freeing Europe from Fascism and who saved the Jews and other peoples from slavery and complete destruction. Let us not forget those who freed the prisoners from Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, Treblinka and other death camps.

At the same time, we are seeing cynical attempts to rewrite history around the world. In some countries that declare themselves democratic, the days of victory over fascism are considered days of tragedy. Memorials to those who fought fascism are demolished. Monuments are erected and official decorations awarded to those who fought for fascism during the war and whose hands are drenched in the blood of innumerable innocent victims. Furthermore, in many States the accomplices of fascism and those who were directly responsible for putting Nazism's racial theories into practice are often seen as representatives of national liberation movements and freedom fighters for their countries. Thus, the very concept of such movements is desecrated, since they are considered to be undertaken in the name of racial purification. We believe that such an approach to be an insult to the historic memory of peoples, especially to those who fought against fascism.

The Second World War cost 50 million people their lives. Having overcome the scourge of Nazism, the world paid too high a price to have to accept attempts to revive it 60 years after the war that led to the creation of the United Nations. We need to be very vigilant in the face of attempts to revive the ideology that led to the Holocaust and uncompromising in combating neo-Nazism and other forms of racism.

That is why the Russian Federation requested that, at this session of the General Assembly, a draft resolution to be submitted to the Third Committee on the inadmissibility of certain practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/C.3/63/L.49). We are convinced that the adoption of the draft resolution would contribute to the consolidation of international efforts to overcome those ugly phenomena. We call on all States that condemn the crimes of Nazism and fascism and pay tribute to its victims to support that initiative.

History has severely condemned National Socialism. The crimes of Nazism and its collapse are a formidable warning to all those who incite ethnic tensions and forget the lessons of the Second World War. We cannot allow people to suffer again by permitting the spread and resurgence of chauvinist doctrines.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union, Croatia, Ukraine, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The European Union, like the United Nations, arose out of the ruins of the Second World War. At the height of the turmoil, the Holocaust covered our entire continent with its ashes. However, far beyond Europe, it marked consciences and changed our hearts. The human race will never be the same again.

More than 60 years have passed since the Holocaust. Where the actual tragedy took place, Europeans have together patiently built a Union that has consolidated peace throughout the continent and brought them security and prosperity. United in their diversity, Europeans have learned the errors of their ways. They did not build to forget — quite the contrary. The memory of the Holocaust was at the core of their entire reconciliation process. Europe is aware of its responsibility towards the survivors, their children and grandchildren. All Europeans must know and remember so that the barbarity that almost swept them away will never emerge again.

Three years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/7, which designated 27 January as International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The European Union welcomes the adoption of that resolution, which commemorates the liberation of the Nazi camps and honours the memory of Holocaust victims, first and foremost the millions of Jewish victims — men, women and children — but also the Roma, homosexuals, political prisoners or prisoners of war, and the physically and mentally handicapped.

Commemorating Holocaust victims is an integral part of our common heritage. It demonstrates our commitment to doing our utmost to counter the very idea that the worst might happen again. Unfortunately, as we have seen in the past, that lesson is still being rejected, denied or scorned in various parts of the world. Even today, as the United Nations meets once again to reaffirm its condemnation of the Holocaust and to perpetuate the memory of its victims, some have cast doubts in that regard or even deny it ever occurred.

That is why the Assembly requested that the Secretary-General establish an outreach programme on the theme "The Holocaust and the United Nations" and take measures to encourage civil society to mobilize throughout the world. The European Union welcomes the programme and the Secretary-General's report (A/63/316), which underscores its successful implementation since its establishment in January 2006. The programme facilitated the creation of an international network of groups from civil society, world-renowned institutions and Holocaust experts to develop as efficient and comprehensive an outreach programme as possible.

By providing civil society with communication tools to keep the memory of victims alive, the programme is contributing to the fight against forgetting or denying the Holocaust. As there are increasingly fewer Holocaust survivors who can still bear witness to it, it is essential that we find new ways to keep the memories of those horrendous crimes alive for future generations.

As the President of the Republic of France said at Auschwitz at the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the camps in 2005,

> "To honour their memory, to honour the memory of all those deportees who died tragically in this place of suffering and Nazi extermination: that is the duty of all peoples who refuse to accept that the insult of oblivion should be added to this betrayal of human values ... When we remember each and every one of them, we give them justice. We prevail over their executioners, who promised them oblivion."

The purpose of adopting a resolution on Holocaust denial (61/255) last year was to confront the dangers of ignorance and scorn. The Holocaust has a specific universal character that cannot be denied or undermined. By commemorating the Holocaust, we reaffirm our commitment to fighting anti-Semitism, racism, hatred and all forms of religious, political or ethnic intolerance. For all those reasons, in 2005 the European Union supported declaring an International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust and establishing a specific United Nations outreach programme.

Members of the Assembly can rest assured that the people of Europe, united in the memory of the horror and in their desire to promote peace and solidarity among all peoples, will continue to act together to repel any temptation to forget and the dangers of disavowal. That is our honour and our duty as a free people.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement which has just been made by the Ambassador of France on behalf of the European Union.

We thank the Secretary-General for his excellent and comprehensive report (A/63/316) on the programme of outreach on the Holocaust and the United Nations. The report shows that Member States all over the world have benefited from the outreach programme since the adoption of resolution 60/7 in 2005. The resolution also urges Member States to develop educational programmes that will inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust in order to help prevent future acts of genocide and, in that context, specifically mentions the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. As the current Chair of the Task Force, Austria is very grateful for the work carried out by the Secretariat under the outreach programme. Let me share some aspects of the Task Force's work under the Austrian chairmanship.

The Task Force's work is based on the Stockholm Forum Declaration of 2000. The Declaration cites the quest for mutual understanding as one of the most important lessons to be learned from the Holocaust. The commitments it enshrines originate from the unprecedented character of the Holocaust, which will always hold a universal meaning. The Task Force's working groups function as a unique network of international cooperation comprising some of the world's leading experts in the field of education, remembrance and research. The intention is that teachers, students and society as a whole learn about the Holocaust and the lessons to be drawn from it for present and future generations. Task Force efforts to mobilize support and expertise for Holocaust memorials contribute to the culture of Holocaust remembrance. Special working groups focus on the genocide against the Roma, as well as on the Holocaust and other genocides.

The Task Force by its very nature is particularly concerned with tendencies of diminishing or denying the Holocaust. The Task Force is comprised of 25 member States, but it carries its mission beyond its own geographical range. Gaining knowledge about and dealing with the Holocaust should be further mainstreamed. That calls for a broader communication strategy with the aim of having Holocaust remembrance generally accepted as part of human rights education and learning. One of the Task Force's main goals under the Austrian chairmanship is to improve medial outreach. Its website serves as an open and accessible resource for mainstreaming Holocaust education, remembrance and research. The Task Force makes its tools accessible to the general public and seeks to deepen its cooperation with other organizations pursuing similar objectives.

On 10 November 2008, the day of remembrance of the 1938 pogroms, Task Force member States will come together with representatives of the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to discuss common objectives and experiences. My delegation is very pleased that the Special Adviser of the Secretary General for the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Francis Deng, will also be present at that special event.

Mr. McNee (Canada): In 2005, when the United Nations Holocaust remembrance programme was created, an invitation was extended to all Member States to remember the Holocaust and to build societies based on inclusion, human dignity and respect for all persons. It is not good enough for us to stand here today and say that we remember and mourn what happened over six decades ago, for no one can truly comprehend the suffering of those who perished in the Holocaust. But we do understand that the attempted extermination of the Jewish people was a crime against

all of humanity, and we understand that the prevention of genocide is a fundamental responsibility of the international community today.

Societies built on an ethos of tolerance and acceptance, where all forms of racism and discrimination are equally unacceptable, are needed now more than ever. Today, discrimination and intolerance have not yet been eradicated. Doing so is central to the task of preventing genocide and crimes against humanity in the future.

Canada is both supportive of and pleased with the energy and dedication the United Nations Department of Public Information has put into implementing resolution 60/7 of 2005. The Secretary-General's report (A/63/316) provides an impressive list of activities that have been undertaken since then, including initiatives commemorating the end of the Holocaust, network-building, academic seminars, civil society engagement and developing information products for educators. Canada would like that work to continue in years to come.

We have been struck by the fact that so many civil society organizations and artists responded to the United Nations call to work together in ensuring that the Holocaust is never forgotten. We note in that context that a Toronto-based multinational group of children came to the United Nations lobby last year to perform extracts from Oratorio Terezin, a moving piece based on poetry written by children in the Terezin ghetto.

In Canada, we have acted to educate our citizens on the Holocaust. An annual Canadian Holocaust Remembrance Day has been established, at which the Prime Minister, political party leaders and parliamentarians appear with Holocaust survivors on Parliament Hill to ensure that the memory of the Holocaust is never lost. Canadian archival collections — including the Jacob M. Lowy Collection, which contains some of the earliest attempts to document and publicize the Holocaust — have been made available for education and research. The Canadian Government has provided funding to the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, and is currently providing multi-year funding for the creation of a new human rights museum in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Also, Canada has been active in exploring the question of Holocaust-era cultural property.

Canada is very pleased to see that the Department of Public Information has used the entire United Nations network to ensure that the message reach audiences around the world. We applaud the fact that the outreach programme makes every effort to warn against the consequences of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination.

It is very impressive to see so many events and countries in the Secretary-General's report. That having been said, as United Nations information centres are only present in some countries, we all need to do even more to ensure that this messaging reaches the entire world. It is up to national Governments to fill the gap where there is no United Nations presence.

Canada also notes the importance of resolution 61/255 of 2007, which urges all Member States unreservedly to reject any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to that end.

In June 2007, Canada took the first step towards becoming a full member in the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. Membership in the Task Force will strengthen our ability to contribute to the construction of societies, both in Canada and around the world, that are based on human dignity and where acts like the Holocaust are no longer possible.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, Canadians, like all members of the international community, have a duty to remain vigilant with respect to all forms of racism and discrimination, including anti-Semitism. We must ensure that the memory of the Holocaust is never lost. Canada, for its part, is firmly committed to that end.

Mr. Hill (Australia): It is now over 60 years since the world saw the defeat of a barbaric and tyrannical Nazi regime that had been set on the systematic eradication of the Jewish people. Australia considers the genocide perpetrated against the Jewish people during the Holocaust to be the most abhorrent of crimes. It cost many millions of lives and caused immeasurable damage and dislocation to the lives of many millions more. Its effects have been profound for a number of generations and continue to be felt today.

The Holocaust showed the depths to which humankind can descend and made clear to the world the devastating consequences of anti-Semitism, racial

hatred and persecution. However, it is a sad fact that anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial, racism and religious intolerance continue to exist to this day.

Australia commends the work of the United Nations Programme of outreach on the Holocaust and the United Nations, as detailed in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/316). Since its establishment in 2006, the programme has worked actively to meet the aims of resolution 60/7 on Holocaust remembrance, including through memorial and educational activities, exhibitions and media outreach. Raising awareness of the Holocaust not only helps us to remember the many victims but also serves as a reminder of the need to remain vigilant and to take steps to prevent such a horror from happening again.

Mr. Ndabarasa (Rwanda): My delegation commends the Secretary-General for his report, entitled "Programme of outreach on the Holocaust and the United Nations (A/63/316)".

Remembrance of the Holocaust serves first and foremost to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, to educate a generation of young people about the Holocaust and genocide, to raise awareness across the broader public and to stimulate more people to use their voice and challenge society's values. Rwanda, as a nation that has experienced the horrors of genocide, fully appreciates the significance of remembrance and the role it plays in reconciliation and the prevention of future genocides.

My delegation commends the work that the Department of Public Information has undertaken with various stakeholders and through a variety of mediums to ensure that the lessons from the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda are disseminated to as wide an audience as possible. Rwanda has received generous support in exposing what led to the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

My delegation appreciates the work of other organizations that are educating and exposing intolerance in varied forms that may graduate into genocide or acts of genocide. Those noble efforts deserve commendation and the good work must be continued, because hate and intolerance are still forces in our world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I now call on the representative of Iran to exercise the right of reply.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today the General Assembly heard baseless and absurd distortions by certain States against the Islamic Republic of Iran. We reject those distortions and express our concern over and condemnation of the misuse of this body by certain circles to pursue some unwarranted political goals.

We, along with others, have condemned and continue to condemn genocide against any race or ethnic or religious group as a crime against humanity. My delegation wishes to reiterate that unambiguous position here again today. In our view, there is no justification for genocide of any kind, nor can there be any explanation for certain unfortunate attempts made by some, and particularly by the Israeli regime, to exploit past crimes as a pretext to commit new genocides and crimes.

We believe that to be a valid and serious concern that the international community should not fail to address. Unfortunately, certain political and media circles have mischievously interpreted that genuine concern and resorted to a campaign of misinformation and defamation against those who have called for a thorough examination of the incidents.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 59.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.